

CRIS ELI BLAK'S DOMINANT ANIMALS CONFRONTS MACHISMO AND GENERATIONAL TRAUMA THROUGH A PUERTO RICAN FAMILY STORY

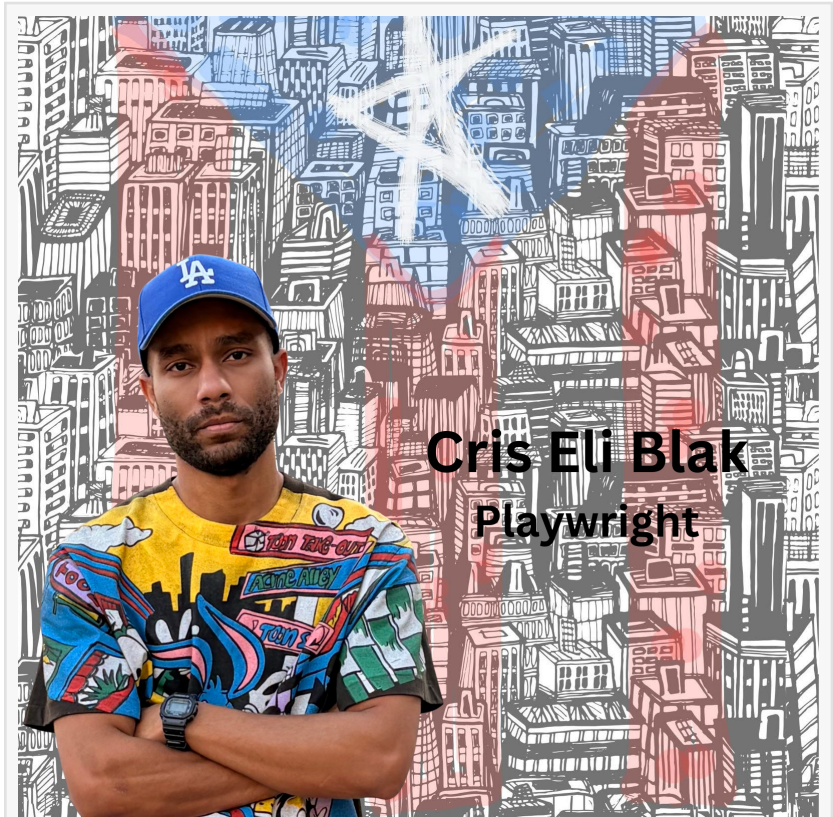
Acclaimed Latino family drama returns to Teatro LATEA for three performances during Hispanic Heritage Month, October 2-4

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES,
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-- What happens when the emotional walls intended to protect a family become the very things preventing it from healing?

That question lies at the heart of *Dominant Animals*, the powerful family drama written by acclaimed playwright Cris Eli Blak. Following its successful New York Theater Festival presentation in June, the production will return to Teatro LATEA for a special Hispanic Heritage Month engagement from October 2-4, 2026.

Presented by VOE Coqui Productions and executive produced by Eddie Martinez, *Dominant Animals* takes audiences inside a Puerto Rican household in Queens whose members must confront the pain, expectations, and destructive patterns passed from one generation to the next.

Through an intimate and emotionally charged family story, Blak examines machismo, toxic masculinity, incarceration, anger, emotional silence, accountability, forgiveness, and the difficult possibility of transformation.



Cris Eli Blak shares "why" he wrote *Dominant Animals*

"I wrote Dominant Animals for the same reason I write all of my shows: because I feel like there's something to say that hasn't been said in this way, about these topics and this subject matter," said Blak.

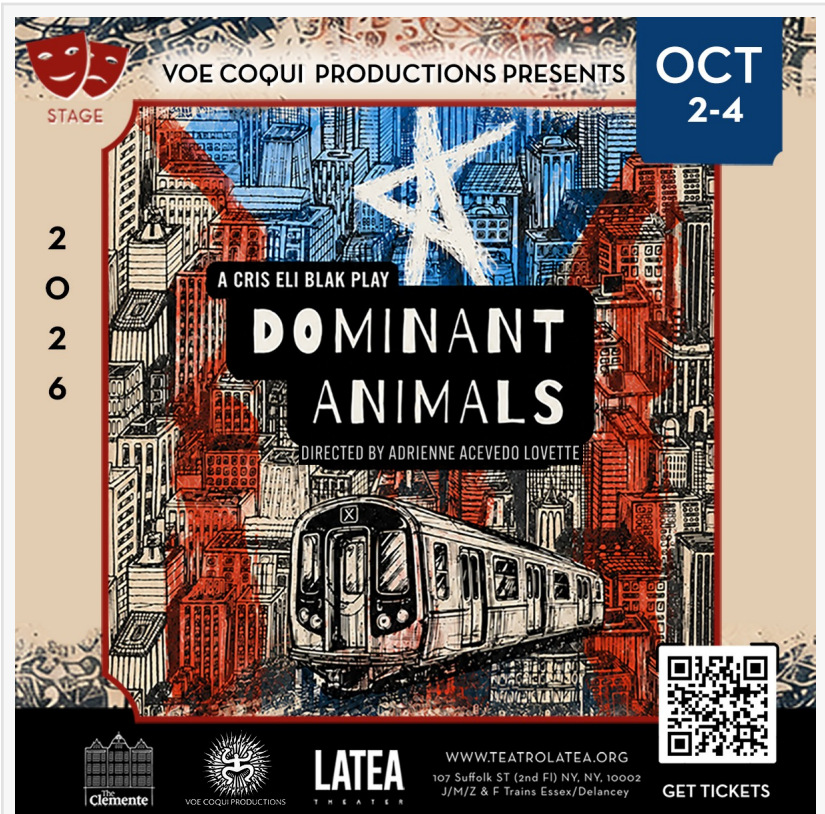
Rather than creating a traditional conflict built around a clearly defined hero and villain, Blak presents characters who are complicated, wounded, and capable of both causing harm and seeking redemption.

"I have no interest in telling stories where there's one hero and one villain because, like it or not, that's not life," Blak explained. "In each of our lives, we are the heroes, and occasionally the villains, of our own stories."

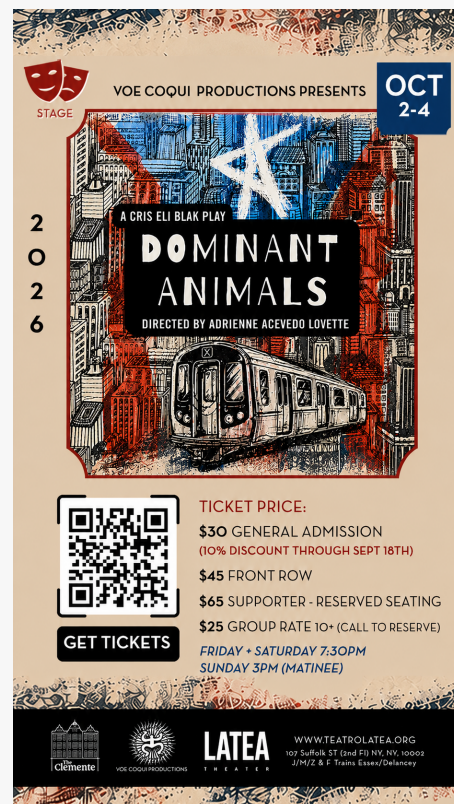
That complexity is central to Dominant Animals. The play does not reduce its characters to their worst decisions or excuse the harm they have caused. Instead, it examines flawed people attempting to repair themselves and their relationships while those around them struggle with whether to forgive, fear, trust, or protect themselves.

"I prefer focusing on the flawed, and those trying to repair those things within themselves, while also trying to repair their relationships and reach for redemption," Blak said. "I prefer focusing on those around them, who are juggling with whether to forgive or fear."

The characters in Dominant Animals have learned to associate masculinity with control, toughness, and an unwillingness to show vulnerability. As long-suppressed conflicts come to the surface, each family member must



See Dominant Animals from Oct 2 - 4 at Teatro LATEA



See Dominant Animals Oct 2-4 at Teatro LATEA in NYC

reconsider what it means to be strong—and whether acknowledging pain can become the first step toward breaking an inherited cycle.

The play also explores incarceration's effects beyond the person who has been imprisoned. It considers how incarceration, judgment, anger, and broken communication can reshape relationships between parents, children, and siblings long after someone returns home.

For Blak, telling this story also means bringing difficult truths affecting communities of color out from behind silence, stigma, and stereotypes.

"All-in-all, I wanted to not only tell a story, but tell a truth—a truth that lays bare, especially in communities of color, and is often swept under the rug or used only to criticize or make an example of," Blak said. "I wanted to tell this story because this is someone's story, and they deserve to see it played out on stage the same as anyone else does."

Blak's intention closely aligns with the mission of VOE Coqui Productions to elevate authentic, underrepresented voices and support stories that entertain while encouraging reflection and meaningful conversation.

"VOE Coqui Productions was created to elevate authentic, underrepresented voices and support stories that entertain while encouraging meaningful reflection and conversation," said Executive Producer Eddie Martinez, who also portrays Felix Burgos. "We chose to produce *Dominant Animals* because Cris Eli Blak's play embodies that mission."

"It presents an honest and deeply human portrait of a Puerto Rican family confronting machismo, generational trauma, incarceration, and emotional silence—issues that are often experienced within our communities but not openly discussed," Martinez continued. "This production allows us to celebrate Latino storytelling while creating a space where audiences can recognize themselves, challenge inherited ideas about masculinity, and consider how accountability, vulnerability, and forgiveness can help families begin to heal."

Although grounded in the experiences of a Puerto Rican family, *Dominant Animals* invites audiences of every background to examine the expectations families place on men, the consequences of unresolved trauma, and the courage required to accept responsibility for harm.

Audiences attending the June festival presentation described the production as "breathtakingly powerful" and "profoundly impactful." One audience member said the play helped them better understand the struggles experienced by their parents and ancestors. Others praised its message of personal growth, self-empowerment, and the healing power of family bonds.

The October engagement will be directed by award-winning Puerto Rican director, producer, writer, and actor Adrienne Acevedo Lovette. Lovette has directed more than 50 plays and

musicals throughout the United States, Off-Broadway, and internationally. She is a SXSW Audience Award winner, a Sundance Collab Film Challenge winner, and a SeriesFest Women Directing Mentorship semifinalist.

To make the Hispanic Heritage Month production more accessible, general-admission tickets purchased through September 18 are 10% off. Discounted tickets are \$27, reduced from the regular price of \$30. Group tickets are available for \$25 per person for groups of 10 or more by contacting Teatro LATEA directly.

Performance Schedule

Friday, October 2, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, October 3, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, October 4, 2026, at 3:00 p.m.

Venue: Teatro LATEA, 107 Suffolk Street, Second Floor, New York, NY 10002

Tickets: www.teatrolatea.org/events

About Dominant Animals

Written by Cris Eli Blak, *Dominant Animals* is a compelling family drama about a Puerto Rican household confronting machismo, generational trauma, incarceration, anger, forgiveness, and the possibility of transformation. The play challenges conventional ideas about masculinity and asks whether people shaped by pain can find the courage to embrace vulnerability, accept responsibility, and break inherited cycles.

The October engagement is presented by VOE Coqui Productions, directed by Adrienne Acevedo Lovette, and executive produced by Eddie Martinez.

Photos, production artwork, interviews, press seats, and additional materials are available upon request.

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